Refusal by Embassies to Accept 500 Rupee Notes

2978. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether several Embassies and High Commission in Delhi have refused to accept the 500 rupee notes as visa fees;

(b) if so, the details there of and the reasons therefor; and

(c) what action has been/is being taken in this connection ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) No, Sir

(b) Does not arise

(c) As a precaution, the Ministry of External Affairs have issued a circular to all Diplomatic Missions advising them to accept 500 rupee notes for Consular/ Visa service being rendered by them. They have also been advised to get in touch with Shri Y.S.P. Thorat, Regional Director of the RBI in New Delhi for any doubt the genuineness of any Indian currency note or any other matter connected therewith.

Indo-US Co-operation in the Field of Energy and Environment

2979. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken steps to establish co-operation with United States in the field of energy and environment;

(b) if **so,** the details thereof;

(c) what are the other areas where the Indo-US co-operation has been established;

(d) the agreement signed for the purpose; and

(e) the steps taken to strengthen Indo-US relation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) During the visit of the President Clinton to India, the two sides signed a Joint Statement on Co-operation in Energy and Environment on 22nd March in Agra.

(b) The Joint Statement provides the framework for co-operation between the two countries in the field of energy and environment. The Joint Statement expresses the intention of the two countries to create a Joint Consultative Committee to foster greater bilateral co-operation Govemment-to-Government dialogue and further encourage public and private sector co-operation in these sectors. The Joint Consultative Group will ensure an institutional framework between the two countries to (a) identify, initiate and monitor public and private collaborative projects in research, development, transfer, demonstration and deployment of appropriate technologies and review policies in the areas of clean energy, renewable energy, energy efficiency and power sector reform, (b) explore and expand opportunities for commercial development and co-operation in clean energy, and (c) enhance cooperation on climate change issues that arise in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate.

(C) India and the United States have also agreed to intensify co-operation and consultation on political and security matters, counter-terrorism, trade and commerce, finance and investment, science and technology and health, and to work jointly for promotion of international peace and prosperity in the 21st Century.

(d) During the visit of the US President to India from March 21-25, 2000, FM and President Clinton signed a Joint statement on 21st March in New Delhi, outlining their vision of a closer and qualitatively new relationship in the 2 Ist Century and the architecture of regular, wide-ranging institutional dialogue between India and the United States. India and the US also signed an Agreement to set up an Indo-US Science and technology forum to facilitate scientific contacts and collaboration between the two countries. The two sides also issued a Joint Statement setting out the terms of reference for the Commercial Dialogue. In addition, several agreements and MOUs were also signed between the private sectors of the two countries.

(e) both sides have agreed to take early steps to implement the decisions relating to institutionalisation of dialogue between the two coutries. Prime Minister has accepted the invitation to visit the US at a mutually convenient date. The two sides are also discussing schedules for the ministerial and oflRcial level dialogues on foreign policy and security matters, and on co-operation in trade and commerce, finance and investment, energy' and environment, science and technology and counter-terrorism.